

Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2012:7

# A STRONG BASIS FOR INCLUSION AND EQUALITY

## **Finland's Disability Policy Programme VAMPO 2010–2015**

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A Strong Basis for Inclusion and Equality  
Finland's Disability Policy Programme  
VAMPO 2010–2015

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# SUMMARY

## A STRONG BASIS FOR INCLUSION AND EQUALITY Finland's Disability Policy Programme VAMPO 2010–2015

- All people are equal. All people must have equal opportunities to live and act in society. Discrimination is forbidden. Abuse and violent treatment are punishable acts. In practice, however, people with disabilities cannot exercise their rights and freedoms or fulfil their responsibilities. Structural barriers and prevalent attitudes in society restrict the independent living and coping, self-determination and social inclusion of people with disabilities at all ages.

The Government wants to ensure the equal status of people with disabilities in society by tackling drawbacks by concrete corrective and development measures. For this purpose, the drafting of the Disability Policy Programme was started. The programme outlines concrete disability policy actions for the next few years (2010–2015). The social developments to achieve sustainable and accountable disability policy are outlined in the same context. They require measures both in the next few years and on a longer term.

The measures of the programme are ambitious and aim at developing all the relevant policy sectors from the perspective of the rights, freedoms and equal opportunities of persons with disabilities. The programme is divided into 14 content areas that are important from the point of view of disability policy. It comprises of altogether 122 concrete measures to tackle the drawbacks. Each corrective or preventive measure needed to eliminate or alleviate them has been looked at separately. The administrative sector responsible for im-

plementation as well as the timetables, financial needs, obligations and an indicator by which the implementation of the measure is followed have been examined in regard to each of them. Some of the measures require amendments to the relevant legislation and steering of the implementation. What are needed in addition are education, information, extensive improvements, development of financing and structures, updating of concepts as well as strengthening the knowledge base in support of the implementation and monitoring of disability policy.

The main content of the Disability Policy Programme consists of measures to ensure the following objectives:

1. The legislative amendments necessitated by the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities will be prepared and implemented;
2. The socioeconomic status of persons with disabilities and combating poverty will be improved;
3. The availability and high quality of special services and support measures will be ensured across the country;
4. Accessibility in society will be strengthened and increased; and
5. Disability research will be reinforced, the information base improved and diversified high-quality methods developed in support of disability policy and monitoring.

It is estimated that more than half of the measures of the Disability Policy Programme can be realised without extra costs to the administrative sector implementing them. Some of the measures require financing at once or in a later phase of the implementation. In several respects, the demand for funding will be specified only after the responsible sector has decided on the phasing and levels of the implementation. The ba-

sic principle is that the measures are implemented in line with the Government decision on spending limits in force and within the budget, allocating resources as possible and as needed.

The programme requires efficient implementation and monitoring. They will be initiated once the programme has been completed. The future objective is to achieve a sustainable disability policy. It will foster a diversified society, prevent discrimination and reinforce accessibility in society. All the relevant actors in society are responsible for implementing sustainable disability policy.

Key words:

**disability policy, equality, fundamental rights, human rights, inclusion, main-streaming, non-discrimination**



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# I SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE DISABILITY POLICY

The approach on disability policy has evolved in recent years. The starting points are the fundamental and human rights as well as the development of society according to the principle of mainstreaming. Globally, the rights of persons with disabilities are promoted by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (hereinafter the UN Convention, 2006).

Finland has signed the Convention and its Optional Protocol. According to the Convention, the States Parties must commit themselves to ensure all persons with disabilities full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It requires commitment to all legal, administrative and other measures to ensure the fulfillment in practice of all the rights recognised in the Convention. At the national level, a new approach on disability policy and new activities across the field has been further energised by the Government Report on Disability Policy (2006).

The powerful change in the disability policy approach has influenced our way of setting goals, of acting and of interpreting. Global disability policy has opened new horizons and goals for national disability policy. In a democratic society open for all, everyone must enjoy the right to self-determination and have the opportunity to influence their own lives. Everyone must have the opportunity to participate in social activities and be members of the society. Modern disability policy is executed in a long-term and sustainable way. Goals in terms of social, ecological, cultural,

and economic sustainability will be considered in the policy implementation.

The measures included in the Disability Policy Programme differ from one another in terms of how legally binding they are or how fundamental or far-reaching they are. Measures directing where society is to develop include those related to self-determination of persons with disabilities, accessibility, and attitudes. All measures, including one-time activities, will strengthen participation in society and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. In accordance with the feedback received during the preparation of this Disability Policy Programme, it will be possible to review the measures as parts of a whole according to their primacy and priority.

It is of primary importance to change those regulations which in practice have prevented Finland from ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which it already has signed. These legislative changes required by the Convention are related to the self-determination and freedom of choice of persons with disabilities. At issue are, first, the right of persons with disabilities to freely choose their municipality of residence, the strengthening of their right to self-determination and the clarification of provisions restricting self-determination.

Second, emphasis is placed on measures which bring improvements to the socioeconomic position of persons with disabilities and combat poverty. For this, employment should be a primary way. In case employment is not possible, sufficient social security is necessary to support one's welfare. It is not reasonable for anyone to live one's life without any means of improving one's living conditions.

Third, emphasis is placed on measures which ensure timely and equal access across the country to special

services meeting individual needs. Also, the availability of reasonable accommodation will be improved. Fourth, it is necessary to increase measures to build an accessible society. Existing barriers must be removed, and the creation of new barriers prevented. Fifth, it is necessary to increase research on disability issues, to strengthen our information base and to develop high quality and diverse methods in support of the design, decision-making and monitoring of disability policy. The position of disability research must be strengthened, as well.

Efficacy of the various measures in the programme will be improved by their one-directionality parallel and simultaneous execution. Taken together, these measures will produce a sustainable disability policy. The state will bear the ultimate responsibility for creating what is required so that persons with disabilities will be able to hold their rightful position in society. Nevertheless, the responsibility for the realisation of a sustainable disability policy lies with all actors in society: the public and private sectors and the civil society.

## 2 BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES AND REALISATION OF THE FINNISH DISABILITY POLICY PROGRAMME

### 2.1 BACKGROUND

Traditionally, disability has been perceived as a medical issue and a problem of social policy for which the society has found answers for via measures targeting the individual. The measures have been patronising, caring for or even isolating persons with disabilities away from their community and society. The new rights-based approach that has emerged during the 21st century has shifted the focus of disability policy towards measures that have as their goal to ensure full participation and equality in society for persons with disabilities. According to this new approach, society should be developed in such a way that everyone will have the opportunity to live and act equally with others.

As a member state of the UN, the European Union and the Council of Europe, Finland is committed to promoting a non-discriminating society which is open for all. The Constitution Act of Finland guarantees persons with disability equal treatment and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disability. Equal treatment of persons with disabilities as well as support for life management skills, work and functional capacity and individual autonomy have been essential goals of Finnish disability policy already for a long time and for many administrative sector governments. Over the last few years, significant improvements have been made through major developments in legislation and services. Further, accessibility in society has been improved in many areas.

Gaps and deficits continue, nevertheless, to hamper the realisation of full and effective participation and

equality of persons with disabilities. Barriers linked to social structures and attitudes, lack of knowledge and local differences in the realisation of disability policy all prevent persons with disabilities from full enjoyment of their rights and freedoms as well as exercise of their duties at all ages.

Recent milestones in the overall and long-term development of disability policy include the first Government Report on Disability Policy, the signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006–2015. All of these are from the year 2006.

The first government of Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen gave out a Government Report on Disability Policy in spring 2006. The report included three fundamental principles of Finnish disability policy: right of persons with disabilities to equality, full participation and necessary services and support measures. The report also set goals for the future development of disability policy: 1) disability policy must ensure human rights and non-discrimination; 2) a Disability Policy Programme will be drafted to guide disability policy activities; 3) access to employment for persons with disabilities will be promoted; 4) reasonable level of income will be ensured; 5) equality in the area of education will be realised, and services and support for study will be ensured; 6) cultural rights will be ensured and accessibility of culture promoted; 7) possibilities for independent living will be supported; 8) life management will be improved through disability services; 9) participation and accessibility will be increased by way of ICT solutions; and 10) the acquisition of knowledge concerning persons with disabilities will be increased and disability research strengthened.

During the parliamentary debate on the disability report, the Social Affairs and Health Committee re-

quested that the Government quickly begin to prepare an extensive disability policy programme which would steer the activities of all actors in the field. In its report, the Committee emphasised that the programme need be concrete and the position of persons with disabilities be considered better than at present through the realisation of co-operation across administrative sectors in the field of disability policy.

The Government Programme of the second government of Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen included the drafting of a national disability policy programme to ensure the fair position of persons with disabilities. The Government Programme also mentions that the disability policy programme will provide guidance on the key actions of disability policy over the next years.

In March 2007, Finland signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol which were adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2006. Legislative amendments to existing legislation required by the ratification process are being prepared. The Convention obligates the States Parties to ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and to undertake to adopt all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognised in the Convention. In this way, the Convention emphasises the broad responsibility of all actors in society both in terms of legislation and at all levels of its implementation and monitoring.

The Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006–2015 supports the process of change through which we move from a medical, care or support paradigm of disability towards a human-rights based disability paradigm. The human-rights based approach has quickly gained strength to become the central starting point of



disability policy in Europe as well as across the world. Action based on this approach is central to disability policy in the member states of the Council of Europe. The question is whether persons with disabilities have equal right to humanity as their non-disabled fellow human beings, and are the rights enabled equally with others.

The obligations of the UN Convention are already taken into account in the development of national legislation and administrative practices. This Disability Policy Programme and its preparation do their part in promoting the national implementation of the Convention.

## 2.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the Disability Policy Programme is to ensure the equal status, participation and non-discrimination of persons with disabilities in society.

The Government wants to ensure the equal status of persons with disabilities in society by tackling drawbacks by concrete corrective and development measures. The programme outlines the concrete disability policy actions for the next few years (2010–2015) and beyond. It creates a strong basis for the realisation of participation in society and equality of persons with disabilities.

The programme strengthens the realisation of disability policy in all sectors of social policy. It is about mainstreaming of disability policy and the clarification and strengthening of sectoral responsibility over disability policy. The objective is to increase the visibility of an often marginalised disability policy across the administrative sector. The programme highlights the existing barriers that prevent persons with disabili-

ties from fully participating in society and what actions need to be taken to remove those barriers. Another objective is to influence development trends in society so as to realise the full and active participation of persons with disabilities in all areas of society.

The programme offers support and direction to municipal and regional disability policy. It also offers a tool for an extensive national promotion and implementation of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The goal of the open and interactive preparation process of the Disability Policy Programme has been to increase awareness about disability across administrative sectors and even more extensively in the whole society. The objective is to strengthen the perspective based on the human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities and the respect for their human dignity. A related goal is to increase positive perceptions of the capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities in the development of society. This is a way to effectively combat prejudices and ignorance relating to disability in all areas of life.

## 2.3 REALISATION OF THE DISABILITY POLICY PROGRAMME

The Disability Policy Programme has been prepared in co-operation with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Partners also include important actors in the field of disability policy: Finnish Disability Forum, Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, social part-

ners, National Institute for Health and Welfare, and National Council on Disability.

A total of 19 thematic meetings were organised between representatives of the above-mentioned ministries, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, social partners and other organisations. With each party, two meetings were held, as a rule. These were held between December 2008 and September 2009. During the first round of meetings, a dialogue was held on the basis of background documentation about the areas of responsibility of each administrative sector in terms of disability policy and their present status, needs and prospects for development. During the second round, this dialogue was continued: taking up the content areas which are significant for disability policy and the existing barriers to equality and participation; establishing the measures needed to resolve existing barriers, how to prioritise the measures and how to plan for their timing and financing. Also, it was established what kind of measurements or other reliable progress indicators could be used for monitoring the progress made. For each measure, it was determined which administrative sector bears the primary responsibility for realising the measure and which administrative sectors are major partners in this realisation. Further, it was established which are the essential pieces of legislation that obligate the administrative sectors to take actions with a view to realising the measures or that support the realisation of measures.

While determining the essential content areas of disability policy, we had to find a solution for the fundamental question whether to maintain a traditional division along administrative lines or to aim to view the policy contents through the perspective of social themes. The latter approach was adopted. Although it is the more demanding one, it was selected because

the objective of the Disability Policy Programme is to extend disability policy across administrative barriers into a part of social policy. For example, the thematic content area (1) Independent living has been formed into a highly extensive whole under the responsibility of several administrative sectors. The content area of independent living would, thus, include, alongside the issues there discussed, at least the following: participation in society, employment, study, security and personal integrity, all extensive in nature. For practical purposes of division, each has been dealt with separately.

In support of the preparation of the Disability Policy Programme, a launch seminar was organised at the end of 2008 and a national seminar of public hearing at the end of 2009. Under the presidency of the Minister of Health and Social Services Paula Risikko, six regional public hearings have been held. The dates of the hearings and their main themes of discussion were:

28.8.2009	Southern Finland/Kouvola Social and health services ensuring participation and equality
1.9.2009	Lapland/Rovaniemi Built environment, including housing
2.9.2009	Oulu/the City of Oulu Working life
5.10.2009	Eastern Finland/Kuopio Education and study
25.1.2010	South-western Finland/Turku Equality planning and security in society
22.2.2010	Western and Central Finland/Seinäjoki Accessibility of communication

For the final form and content of the Disability Policy Programme, feedback was collected from the participants of the regional hearings on site, on the internet and with a structured questionnaire to be mailed.

Apart from the regional hearings, the preparation of the Disability Policy Programme was presented in other seminars, events and fairs across the country in different stages of the preparation. The National Council on Disability (VANE) organised a discussion event on the needs for co-operation in terms of disability policy among different administrative sectors in June 2010 and the advocacy network of the Finnish Disability Forum in January 2010. Experts from various administrative sectors have had at their disposal a series of overheads to present the preparation of the programme. The progress of the programme preparation has remained a permanent item on the agenda of the meetings of VANE throughout the process.

Over 2,000 participants have attended the events. The feedback received has supported the preparation work extensively, and it has particularly enriched the sections presenting the significance and current status of the disability policy content areas. They have also provided insights and support for the drafting of the objectives and the directions of development.

The transparency and openness of the preparation have been enhanced by the interactive VAMPO site at [www.vane.to/](http://www.vane.to/). The site has been maintained throughout the preparation of the Disability Policy Programme. Basic information about the programme preparation has been available in Finnish and Swedish as well as in the Finnish Sign Language, plain Finnish, the Sami language and English. The draft version of the Disability Policy Programme was published on the website in mid-November 2009 for a public round of comments open to all.

The Disability Policy Programme has been prepared under the direction of a steering group set up by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health for the period of 1.9.2008–31.3.2010. The tasks of the steering group have been 1) to act as a co-operation network in the preparation of the programme between the various administrative sectors; 2) to support, direct and monitor the preparation of the Disability Policy Programme with the aim of equality and non-discrimination for persons with disabilities; 3) to ensure balance between the various parts of the programme; 4) during the programme preparation, to hear the views of various interested parties; and 5) to ensure that various actors are informed about the issues relative to the preparation of the Disability Policy Programme.

The steering group was chaired by Director Kari Ilmonen from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The steering group met ten times over the course of the preparation of the Disability Policy Programme. The members, secretaries and their organisations are presented in annex 1.

### 3 CHALLENGES OF DISABILITY POLICY

The challenge of disability policy is to guarantee the realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities also in practice. It is the duty of public authorities to ensure the realisation of the rights. The equality and non-discrimination of persons with disabilities is guaranteed in the Constitution Act of Finland. Everyone has the right to lead one's own life, to gain respect and to be heard and understood in their own modes, means and methods of communication. In practice, this requires recognition of equal opportunities and social participation of persons with disabilities as well as the removal of barriers in the way of their independent living. The objective must be to allow space for diversity in society. It also means that the perspective of participation and equality must be taken into consideration extensively across various policy sectors. Further, it means that all sectors of administrative sector must share the common goal to strengthen accessibility of the society in all their activities.

To address the existing barriers to full participation of persons with disabilities and the prevention of new barriers, activities need to be introduced in the following thematic areas:

1. Independent living, including equality of opportunities in the areas of family life and housing, communication, mobility, access to information and communication. Independent living also includes other

areas of life, such as participation in society, employment, access to justice, security of the person and personal integrity. These thematic areas, problems therein and necessary corrective measures are dealt with in sections 3.2., 3.6. and 3.9.

2. Inclusion and participation in society: central issues include those relative to civil rights, particularly to legal capacity and the public services ensuring inclusion and specific services complementing the mainstream public services.

Conditions for inclusion and participation are created through accessibility of the built environment, availability and functioning of and access to services, usability of goods and services as well as extended opportunities through modern information and communications technology to independent living and activity. These are dealt with in sections 3.1. Independent living and 3.3. Built environment.

3. Built environment; challenges include increasing the accessibility of the environment as well as ensuring and further developing access to the living environment.
4. Traffic services for all require that the accessibility of the means of traffic and their environments of use are strengthened and that necessary assistance is ensured.
5. Education and studying: issues related to school attendance, studying and lifelong learning together with others are most essential to schoolchildren and students with disabilities.



6. Work: key issues are related to employment, working, career progress and work retention as well as the prevention of poverty and social exclusion.
7. Health care and rehabilitation, where the starting point is to offer basic services to all citizens, ensuring access to services and their right timing and also the functioning of assistive technology, assistive devices and services.
8. Social security: the development of pension legislation, making it more flexible in order to create a combination of various benefits and to prevent poverty are important measures to realise the inclusion and equality of persons with disabilities.
9. Legal protection, safety and personal integrity. In this thematic area, the necessary measures are related to the strengthening of the protection offered by the justice system to persons with disabilities as well as the prevention of abuse and risk of violence. Further, measures are needed to ensure assistance and security for persons with disabilities in situations of emergency and crisis. Attention should also be paid to developing and increasing assistance and security-related measures through international co-operation.
10. Culture and leisure, where equal opportunities and inclusion in sports, arts, library services and travel services are essential issues for persons with disabilities.
11. Discrimination faced by persons with disabilities. In this thematic area, attention is paid to the recognition, prevention and combating of discrimination,

including multiple discrimination and indirect discrimination.

12. Strengthening the knowledge base. In this thematic area, measures are needed to strengthen the reliability and diversity of instruments which support the direction, realisation and evaluation of disability policy.
13. Securing the sustainability of disability policy resources. In this thematic area, it is proposed that resources in use for tax rebates be redirected to active disability policy and to strengthening and securing of special services.
14. International co-operation, where the rights of persons with disabilities need to be taken into consideration as a cross-cutting theme in various activities and fora. International co-operation strengthens the national disability policy. It obligates our nation to develop disability policy in accordance with international treaties and guidelines. It also calls for an increasingly significant role for disability NGOs as actors in international disability policy.

### 3.1 INDEPENDENT LIVING

#### *Presentation, significance and current situation of the thematic area*

Everyone has the right to life and personal liberty. According to the Constitution, public authorities must support the abilities of families and others charged

with the care of children to provide for their welfare and individual growth. It is the task of public authorities to promote the right of everyone to a dwelling and to support the efforts of persons to provide their own housing. Finnish citizens and foreign citizens lawfully resident in Finland have the right to move freely within the country and to choose their place of residence. Freedom of movement is one of the four basic freedoms of the European Union. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, also the right to use one's own language and the right to culture.

In practice, all persons do not have the right to choose who they will live with, whether they want to start a family or what is their place of residence. Persons who are receiving care in units of social welfare or health care do not have the freedom to choose or change their municipality of residence. For women and men with disabilities, realising some things that are normal in the course of life is often less secure and more difficult than for their non-disabled peers. To have a relationship, to start a family and to become parents have not been self-evident stages in the life course of persons with disabilities. The fact that persons with disabilities are considered and treated in a gender-neutral way has been recognised as one reason for this. Such a gender-neutral approach limits the realisation of basic human needs.

In a modern society, persons with disabilities have more opportunities to live independently and to control their environment. Accessibility and security of housing, accessible living environments and well-functioning services are essential prerequisites for independent living. Notwithstanding that some progress has been made towards their realisation in recent years, the determined and goal-oriented work towards this objective is only starting. There is not yet enough housing on offer that

is sufficiently accessible or capable of being rendered accessible without too much difficulty. The availability of services which support individual forms of housing varies across the country, as does the consideration of accessibility of dwelling environments in planning.

The new information and communication technology enables persons with disabilities to have a larger degree of independence and control over their own lives. Solutions realised in co-operation with persons with disabilities have significantly promoted the realisation of independent living. Danger remains, however, that the technology will bring along new barriers if the starting point of planning and realisation is not to provide services for all citizens. Persons with disabilities, their friends and relatives, together with all actors in society, need more information on new solutions which make life easier and support independent activity and communication.

### *Objective and directions of development*

An open and democratic society offers all its members an opportunity to lead a full and good life which is as independent as possible at all ages. It is important for everyone to be able to plan one's life in a way that best meets the needs and wishes of the person and those close to him or her in all stages of life. Everyone must have equal opportunities to strive towards and realise a life that is good for oneself. Parents with disabilities have a right to all services targeting the family. This includes the right to parenthood with related services, such as an opportunity to participate in family planning. The starting point is to provide services equally and in accordance with the needs of parents with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities. Equality among families with children can and must be supported by means of a variety of instruments.

Poor manageability of information, services and modes of support remains the problem. The whole of family services needs to be clarified and developed so that it meets the needs of both the child and the parents in a speedy and safe manner.

Parenthood includes the opportunity to take care of all the children in the family. Apart from parenthood, there should be enough resources for the parents to take care of their relationship and to go to work. Combining family and work responsibilities is a particular challenge both for parents with disabilities and for parents of children with disabilities.

By clarifying the whole of family services it is possible to make the co-operation of various actors stronger and smoother in order to render better services to ensure growth and development of children and the coping of parents. Co-operation in early education and care, day care, pre-primary school, comprehensive school, leisure activities and across professions and administrative sectors will support both the children and their parents.

Persons with disabilities are first and foremost women and men. It may cause severe strain on the relationship if the spouse becomes seriously ill or disabled. In problem situations guidance, right kind of information as well as support from professionals and peers may bring significant benefits to the spouses. In a divorce situation, while deciding on the guardianship of children, the issue should be regarded not only from the perspective of the present situation, but also over a longer timespan. The acute stage having been passed, a parent who has become disabled or seriously ill can generally take good care of the children. For persons who are disabled from birth, also the right to parenthood must be secured in decisions on guardianship. The decision concerning guardianship must be based on an assessment of the situation carried out by a neutral party.

The capabilities of a person with disabilities to care for his or her children must be evaluated based on that person's capabilities – and not based on the disability.

For a young person with severe disability, the move away from the childhood home and the building of one's own life present a great challenge for both the young person and the family. To realise a major change in life in a safe and managed way requires planning and good co-operation between the young person, his or her family and those responsible for the necessary services.

Providing support for the realisation of independent living are the services offered to all, and good society planning, alongside with special services, support measures and accommodation measures. These are needed in case the general services and accessibility in society are not sufficient to meet the needs of the person with disabilities. In this case, it is essential to ensure solutions that meet the individual needs and life situation in terms of housing, mobility, communication and access to information. Among other things, this means the right to use the national languages of Finland, Finnish and Swedish and also Finnish Sign Language interpretation or translation aid owing to disability. Over the next few years, there will be a growing need for accessible information and communication solutions. The need for individual means of communication, means and methods of communication supporting and replacing speech as well as easy-to-read materials will increase as the population becomes more diverse and increasingly ageing.

Good housing is one of the essential starting points of independent living. The objective is to have accessible, functionally flexible and easily adaptable apartment housing sufficiently available. In the production of new housing, the objective must be the accessibil-

ity and functionality of the apartments. Thus, there would be no need for extensive accommodation or reconstruction measures after the construction stage for other than already existing, older building stock. Functionality of apartments enables persons with disabilities to be more independent and adds to their well-being. This is why the realisation of accessible housing stock must be promoted in every way possible, with as fast a schedule as possible.

Accessible housing creates security. Many risk factors of home accidents can be eliminated through good design. In terms of solutions for housing security, the objective is to find a balance between security, on the one hand, and solutions enabling independent activities, on the other. The solutions which support independent living should be extended outside of the home to cover the whole living and functioning environment. The objective is to make use of the many options of planning, design of housing environments and the multiple ways of the new information and communication technology so as to significantly improve the level of individual activity of persons and to enhance communality and the quality of life.

### *The measures to be realised (2010–2015)*

The following administrative sectors play an important role in the breaking down of the functional and social barriers of independent living and in the improvement of prerequisites for individual control of life: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Transport and Communications and Ministry of Justice.

Most measures and series of actions can only be realised through co-operation across administrative bor-

ders and sectors. For example, apartments, apartment houses and their environments, traffic connections and services form a chain of activities. Only when all parts of the chain are accessible, it is possible for persons with disabilities to act independently and exercise their freedom of choice. The starting point must be a joint analysis of the areas of responsibility and of the measures to be taken by various administrative sectors, followed by an agreement on measures as well as the systematic inclusion of the expertise and information available in disability NGOs right from the start.

## 3.2 SOCIAL INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION

### *Presentation of the thematic area, its significance and current situation*

Every Finnish citizen who has reached eighteen years of age has the right to vote in national and municipal elections and referendums. The public authorities must promote the opportunities for the individual to participate in social activities and to influence the decisions that concern him or her. Persons with disabilities have the freedom of expression and the right of access to information in a form understandable to them. The right of individuals to influence the decisions that concern them must be secured without any discrimination.

Voting, standing up as candidate in elections, decision-making, expression of one's own wishes and opinion as well as advocacy of own interests are all essential forms of social influence and participation.

The rights of all citizens to participate in the management of community issues have not been equally realised in practice. Persons with disabilities are under-



represented in social activities. They have limited opportunities to use their legal capacity. Similarly, there are many problems and deficits in how their wishes and opinions become heard.

Accessibility, security and moderate prices render general services suitable also for persons with disabilities. The significance of special services as enabling participation and equality of persons with disabilities is also high. Special services are necessary in cases where it is not possible to have the services as general services. The special services have been significantly developed over the last years. The challenge is to ensure the availability of general services and special services as well as their quality and their effective realisation across the nation.

### *Objective and directions of development*

The Finnish society must reflect human diversity and provide support for all citizens so that they can fulfil their social rights and the rights of participation. It is important for persons with disabilities to be able to participate in municipal and national decision-making equally with other citizens. Persons with disabilities have the right to be members of their community and to participate in all its activities at all ages equally with others.

Sometimes it is necessary to support the person with disabilities in the expression of his or her own opinion or wishes. In case the resources are lacking – either in terms of capacity or strength – for such an expression of one's own opinion, it is generally possible to support the person with disabilities in such a way that his or her wishes can be followed. This is what supported decision-making is about. In Finland, the term “supported decision-making” is already in use to some extent. More

extensive forms of supported decision-making can be found in countries where supported decision-making is already included in legislation. In the future, more attention must be paid to the realisation of the rights to participation and to influencing decision-making for children and elderly persons with disabilities. Self-determination is a right belonging to all persons with disabilities, including those who are residents in service housing units, group homes or institutions. Alongside the respect of one's own will and personal autonomy, accessible living environments, traffic and mobility arrangements, reliable information and communication possibilities, also services, instruments, equipment and support measures which support full participation all help create the necessary external conditions for participation in society and active citizenship.

### *The measures to be realised (2010–2015)*

For the realisation in practice of the equal participation in society and decision-making, for the strengthening of systems relative to the guardianship of the individual's interests and right to self-determination and the preparation of a unified set of rules limiting the exercise of self-determination. The responsible ministries are the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Education and Culture and Ministry of Transport and Communications either individually or in co-operation with others.

### 3.3 BUILT ENVIRONMENT

#### *Presentation, significance and current situation of the thematic area*

For persons with disabilities, accessible environment is an absolute prerequisite for independent living and equal opportunities. The starting point is that the environment must serve the needs of all persons. Through design and building of residential and living environments as well as legislation supporting and clarifying their functionality, it is possible to make life significantly easier and to support social participation and equality.

Barriers to the built environment and mobility set persons in an unequal position with one another. These barriers discriminate against persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities can use only a part of the existing services in society and take part in only a part of social activities because buildings and their environments are not accessible.

The inaccessibility of buildings often already starts with deficits in the entrance. Doors are heavy to open, there is not enough room to move in, no signage at all or signage which is not usable for all. Stairs, lack of lifts, poor acoustics, poor lighting and difficulties in divining the contours of the rooms cause many problems for using the premises. In the environment, inaccessibility can exist in differences in terms of levels, for example, between the pedestrian way and the carriageway. Safety-related problems are caused by obstacles in the way and shortcomings in the necessary information.

Over the last few years, some progress has been made in taking into account of Design for All/Dfa and the so-called universal design, raising awareness of them both in terms of building and in terms of realisation of functional solutions. Design for All means solutions that

are suitable for as many persons as possible: accessible buildings, accessible environments and easy-to-use, functioning products. New public buildings and their environments are nowadays significantly more accessible and better functioning. In terms of renovation of buildings, there are many good examples of how accessibility has been improved successfully. Alongside the functioning solutions, some have been realised that are not sufficient in terms of accessibility, not having in fact made any contribution to the opportunities of persons with disabilities to use services or participate in societal activities. For accessible construction, significant challenges still present themselves.

### *Objective and directions of development*

The objective is accessibility of the built environment. In the first stage, construction of accessible buildings will be increased and made more effective. Accessible buildings and environment increase social inclusion and equality for all users, particularly for persons with disabilities and aged persons. They prevent indirect discrimination in the society. Accessibility helps to improve the usability and ecological sustainability of the environment.

Accessible environment contributes to creating security. It reduces the risk of accidents and can prevent victimisation for violence.

Accessibility of the built environment is strengthened by use of various means. Inaccessible construction is prevented by the strengthening of legislation and guidance. The promotion of Design for All is one way to strengthen accessibility of the society. The objective is to have an accessible building stock, particularly accessible housing stock, by way of ensuring that all new construction is built accessible from the outset and existing construc-

tions are made accessible in the course of renovations. Construction and Design for All will be made stronger by increasing know-how across the various professions in construction through systematic training. The EU directive on non-discrimination will obligate both the design and the designers. If adopted, it will significantly improve accessibility in the building stock. According to the directive, buildings and facilities are designed and constructed for all in such a way that they, by themselves or by way of reasonable accommodation will meet the needs of residents with disabilities or their families and employees or clients with disabilities, as well.

Multifaceted development of accessible built environment can be made through new perspectives. Inaccessible environment seen as discrimination is one such new perspective. Going forward, we should also analyse what legislative changes are necessary from the perspective of the non-discriminatory environment.

### *The measures to be realised (2010–2015)*

The Ministry of the Environment is responsible for the promotion of accessibility in relation to new buildings and the existing building stock as well as for the development of accessibility in the near environment. Often this will take place in co-operation with other ministries which will have the responsibility for drawing up the guidelines within their administrative sector. The owner of the property, however, is responsible for the renovations of inaccessible buildings and facilities. The ministries or other state officials have possibilities to use their influence in such a way that the accessibility of buildings in their own administrative sector will be ensured, primarily when new projects are being decided on or when financial support decisions for construction projects are under consideration.

## 3.4 TRANSPORT SERVICES

### *Presentation of the thematic area, its significance and current situation*

Freedom of movement is guaranteed under the Constitution. However, persons with disabilities do not in practice enjoy the same possibilities for movement or the freedom to choose a form of transport most suitable for their situation as all other citizens do and have at their disposal. Because transport services are inaccessible, the principle of equality is only partially realised in many cases. Many barriers and problems continue to exist in built environments. For example, old station buildings and their environments are often inaccessible and hard to reach. This is why the use of public transport is not always safe, even if the means of transport themselves would be suitable for persons with disabilities.

Barriers to independent use of the public transport system include problems with access to information. Also, the lack of necessary assistance in the use of transport services or being unaware about availability of assistance prevents disabled persons from travelling independently and safely.

Over the last few years, several development projects to improve accessibility on public transport have been realised. Also, training that includes consideration of needs of persons with disabilities has been increased for the transport personnel. In the future, it is important that the minimum level of accessibility and assistance is guaranteed by way of implementing nationally the EU regulations on the accessibility of various means and modes of transport as well as the provision of assistance. Likewise, the necessary conditions for extending the use of public transport services will be ensured. After the entry into force of both the 2009 legislation on public transport and

the EU regulation on service contracts, the level of service in public transport will be decided at the regional level. Upon deciding on the level of service of public transport, the needs of various population groups must be taken into consideration to a larger extent than previously. The legislation includes regulations on the conditions for the increased use of competitive tendering as well as on an obligation for quality service applying to all providers of public bus services.

### *Objective and directions of development*

Social justice in traffic services means that all persons have the right and possibility to move and have access to basic services and to relevant information. Equal opportunities to movement and the flexibility of movement can be significantly improved by designing the traffic systems in such a way that persons with disabilities can manage their activities and meet their daily needs for movement in the same safe way as other persons. The objective is to increase the possibilities of persons with disabilities to make a choice between various forms of transportation, including public transport.

In order to ensure traffic services which are equal and safe, it is necessary to make the accessibility of modes of traffic and their environments more effective. Also, the necessary assistance for travelling in and for changing transport needs to be organised and made part of everyday service. The whole chain of transport – including necessary traffic information and changes from one mode of transport to another – will need to be made well-functioning. In terms of information available, we need to have simultaneous information in form of voice, text and picture. We need to promote compatibility between various forms of traffic. We need to promote unified traffic routes, clear venues and enough

space to move. In the design of traffic environments more attention needs to be paid in the future to so-called calming solutions – that is management of speeds and levels of noise; these solutions should be realised in different forms of traffic.

In Finland, it is both possible and necessary to realise traffic on the basis of national starting points and needs. The objectives should not be bound to a minimum level defined in the EU legislation.

The promotion of accessibility in traffic services should be continued from the level already achieved nationally if progress has already been made beyond the level of obligation set in the EU legislation. As regards bus traffic in particular, it is important that accessibility is developed nationally and possibilities for receiving assistance are ensured. The national implementation of the EU regulations must be monitored in a systematic way. Monitoring of the EU regulation on the rights of air passengers with reduced mobility requires particular attention nationally. Alongside the public transportation services, also the development of taxi services must be continued towards greater accessibility and safety. The objective is be that taxi services are usable for persons with disabilities, too.

In the development of traffic services, it is important to create good prerequisites for persons with disabilities to influence and participate in the design and decision-making concerning their own living environment and traffic solutions. The various needs and opportunities that persons with different disabilities have must be taken into consideration at all stages of planning and realisation of traffic systems. The principle must be to design and realise all new traffic services and systems as accessible and to remove existing barriers.



## *The measures to be realised (2010–2015)*

The improvement of accessibility of public transport services, organisation of passenger assistance and the development of taxi traffic accessibility as well as the overall monitoring are under the responsibility of Ministry of Transport and Communications, in particular. The responsibility for increasing the accessibility of the environment for modes of traffic lies with the Ministry of the Environment. In terms of the national implementation of EU regulations, responsibility lies with both the Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Ministry of Justice.

### 3.5 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

#### *Presentation, significance and current situation of the thematic area*

Everyone has the right to a basic education free of charge and equal opportunity to receive other than basic education according to his or her capabilities and needs. Children and young people with disabilities go to school and study together with their peers. The starting point is to ensure the whole age group equal opportunities to attend school or training and seek a profession.

Educational policy based on the principle of community schooling has been the main form of action since the early 1980s. According to this principle all students attend school in their own residential area, which means that school attendance is as safe as possible, school trips are short and social connections to one's own community are strengthened.

For young people with disabilities, access to education after the comprehensive school is not equal in all

respects compared to other young people of the same age. There are differences in access to various levels of education as well as various fields of education; there are also differences across locations. The greatest difficulties are faced by young people with the most severe disabilities.

The training of young persons with disabilities is focused on the vocational training. Opportunities to continue studies in upper-secondary school or university have been realised to a lesser extent for young students with disabilities than with other students, although the number of students with disabilities in universities has grown.

In vocational training, the objective will be to increase the relative share of young persons with disabilities in the general educational institutions. The responsibility for organising vocational training to the most severely disabled young people lies with the vocational institutions of special education, which also act as expertise centers for special education. Training for young persons in need of special support has been one of the main goals of vocational training over the last few years. Educational equality and access to education have been extended. More attention has been paid to qualitative issues in special education. The longest steps towards the realisation of equality have been taken in basic education.

### *Objective and directions of development*

The possibilities of persons to further their autonomy and social participation are significantly extended by way of further education. It is important that educational possibilities are ensured for children, young people and adults with disabilities in various stages of life, from pre-primary education to primary education and further to secondary and tertiary education as well as lifelong learning.

According to the general principle of community schooling, the possibilities of children and young people with disabilities to attend school and education-related activities must be ensured on an equal basis with others.

Equal opportunities must include all groups of persons with disabilities. This requires that accessibility is ensured in all school and training buildings as well as in the learning environment. Furthermore, reasonable accommodation measures are needed to make it easier for students to learn Braille and other means, modes and methods of communication that support or replace speech, for example by ensuring that study materials are available in Braille or easy-to-read formats. One should take advantage of new reading and writing programmes made possible by new technology, subtitling or sufficient, individualised and timely services. These include, for example, interpretation service and transport service as well as support and assistance provided by assistants. It is also necessary that the regulations to a larger extent take into consideration the need for flexibility in terms of young disabled students to a larger extent and in a more systematic way. The practical realisation of these regulations is far from easy. For example, possibilities to physical education must be ensured for all students.

Activities related to the school, particularly the travel to and from school, must be arranged successfully, as this is a precondition to successful schooling. The trip from home to school or place of study and back must be well-functioning and safe in all its parts.

Especially during the comprehensive school, co-operation between the school and the parents of children with disabilities is a necessary prerequisite for successful school attendance. It is necessary to recognise together the barriers which prevent a young person with disabilities from attending school, and also to find solu-

tions to remove those barriers. Support and encouragement are necessary from both the school and the family to a larger extent than normally so that the child or young person with disabilities can continue his or her schooling after comprehensive school and to graduate into a vocational profession. Whether support is given or not, at the crucial juncture of transfer between educational stages, can have a major significance to the whole life course of the young person. The education system must invest especially in guiding young persons with disabilities across the vital divide between primary education and secondary education.

After the comprehensive education, studies in vocational training, in upper-secondary education and university level must be supported and made easier by way of reconstructing inaccessible school and study environments. The study materials must be made available in accessible format according to the needs of the student.

Further, it must be ensured that the necessary services for studying will be made available. Vocational training must be further diversified in such a way that it will offer training which meets the demands of modern workplace to young people with disabilities, as well.

The studying of young persons with disabilities within mainstream vocational education must be continuously developed in co-operation with the parties responsible for making decisions about vocational training and for its organisation.

More possibilities to postgraduate and continuing professional education are needed for young persons and adults with disabilities. In the future international exchange and training programmes must be available and accessible for young persons with disabilities at various stages of education on an equal basis with others.

## *The measures to be realised (2010–2015)*

The realisation and development of education in such a way that all citizens in different stages of life have equal possibilities to strengthen their independence and social participation through education and study, is the primary responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture in close cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and the Ministry of Finance, in particular.

### 3.6 EMPLOYMENT

#### *Presentation of the thematic area, its significance and current situation*

The right to work is a fundamental right. Everyone has the right to earn his or her livelihood. The public authorities must take responsibility for the protection of the labour force.

Regardless of the trade cycle, employment for persons with disabilities in different age groups has been more difficult than for non-disabled persons. Employment in the open labour market either directly or with some labour market support measures has not progressed in the way that we would have hoped. The rate of unemployment among persons with disabilities is significantly higher than among non-disabled persons of the same age. Particularly difficult is to find the first job and to start one's career. The threat is that unemployment becomes a permanent state. Exclusion from the labour market takes away from persons with disabilities the possibilities to improve themselves and their own life

conditions and to strengthen their social participation.

Employment policy measures have not been effective enough in assisting persons from rehabilitation work activity to the open labour market. There is a problem in that the rehabilitation activity or work activity become the permanent forms of work, regardless of how much the work capacity or the competence of the person has developed over time. Exclusion from paid employment makes ever more remote the chances that the person with disabilities could improve his or her living conditions or strengthen his or her participation in society.

In Finland, as in many member states of the European Union, the number of persons in the labour market has been decreasing through trade cycles as well as through demographic changes. It is estimated that there will be a growing need for the input of persons with disabilities in the labour market in the future. Breaking the barriers preventing employment and getting adequate support in order to be able to continue in the working life have not been progressing as the kind of overall activity necessary for this development. The common goal of lengthening the careers of all Finns applies also to employees with disabilities on an equal basis with others.

### *Objective and directions of development*

Paid employment is the basis for participation and economic independence. Employment offers all persons the possibility to build up their own welfare, and combat poverty and exclusion. This is why it is important to ensure everyone the possibilities to participate in paid employment. The objective is that persons with disabilities find employment in the open labour market and are paid for it.

In a well-functioning labour market, partial or temporary work capacity cannot become a barrier to em-

ployment. On the contrary, a labour market which leaves out a significant part of human resources cannot be considered as just or effective. Having a disability does not generally prevent a person of being a productive employee. The objective is to support reforms which put more emphasis on active job-seeking and job finding opportunities rather than on solutions built on the basis of social security. For example, the needs of persons with disabilities to find part-time work or their willingness to choose part-time work for a definite period or for a long time are not yet sufficiently known. There are many good examples available in other countries of successful arrangements for part-time work. These examples can support the development of new kinds of employment solutions in Finland, too.

Barriers to employment can be removed or reduced by way of multisectoral employment policy, by finding new solutions or by policy that is targeted and progresses step-by-step when needed. Major ways include individual vocational guidance and advice, subsidised employment and strengthening the co-operation between the employment and education administrative sectors as well as in general providing active support to young persons in particular so that they can find a place in the working life. Further, measures to find those who are seeking employment and to recruit them must be developed so that the measures become more innovative and free from preconceptions. The improvement of the knowledge base as well as good examples of persons with disabilities as employees will all support the beginning, continuation and upward mobility of careers for persons with disabilities. It should be possible for persons with disabilities to accept international assignments both nationally and internationally on an equal basis with others. It should and must be made easier for entrepreneurs with disabilities to gain a living by

developing new ways which meet the needs of modern society and modern professional structure.

A more effective use of existing employment policy measures in support of access to work and continuing in work must be ensured. In particular, it is estimated that the wider use of reasonable accommodation measures or financial support to accommodate the workplace promotes access to the working life and facilitates the opportunities to stay there. Also, the flexible use of wage support would increase possibilities of finding employment for those who would like to return to work from disability pension or who have done so.

As an opening of the career, the first employment one finds is highly significant. After the employment has been found, it is important that the person's needs for individualised accommodation measures and services are analysed and that those needs are met. Often, it is a question of improving and ensuring the accessibility of the work environment. It is easier to work with the right kind of individually fitted technical aids. For many people with severe disabilities, personal assistance is a prerequisite for being able to work. The daily commute from home to work and back again must be smooth and safe. It is important that support and services for the accommodations which make work possible are available from the beginning of the employment relationship. For employees to be able to continue in work, it is important to have a well-functioning occupational health care that will address problems actively and provide well timed occupational rehabilitation. Successful rehabilitation that supports work capacity will enhance the possibilities for persons with disabilities to participate in society and promote the realisation of economically sustainable disability policy.

The employment of persons with disabilities can also be supported by making changes to existing concepts so that



they better reflect the situation of today. The term “person with reduced capacity” is stigmatising to persons with disabilities. It does not reflect their work capacity in the correct way, and it is contrary to modern disability policy.

### *The measures to be realised (2010–2015)*

Employment of persons with disabilities, like of all citizens, is supported by the administrative sector under the Ministry of Employment and the Economy. It can also offer support to the employer of persons with disabilities for the realisation of necessary measures of reasonable accommodation in order to facilitate the working. This requires cooperation in many ways with other administrative sectors such as the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Education and Culture as well as the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Finance.

## **3.7 HEALTH CARE AND REHABILITATION**

### *Presentation of the thematic area, its significance and current situation*

The public authorities must guarantee adequate health services for everyone. Not all citizens/municipal residents – due to their disability or reduced functional capacity – are able to use services of public and private health care on an equal basis with others.

Inaccessibility of health care facilities and their environments, together with the lack or ill timing of the necessary services, such as interpretation services, can become a barrier to the safe and smooth use of the services. More specialist knowledge about disability is

needed within the primary health care system, so that the use of health services would function better and run more smoothly. The availability and functioning of special services under a specific health care legislation varies across municipalities, and inequalities in access to health services due to place of residence affect person with disabilities, as well.

Rehabilitation has the potential to promote and strengthen the independence of persons with disabilities at all ages. It provides support for participation of both children and elderly persons schooling, study, access to working life, staying in work and economic independence. Rehabilitation is provided by many different organisations. Rehabilitation legislation gives detailed provisions on the rehabilitation tasks of the various service providers. The responsibility of various rehabilitation service providers has been integrated into the general framework of health services and social welfare. In addition to the division of tasks, each actor has been given an obligation in law to guide the clients to an appropriate form of rehabilitation and an obligation to follow the separate legislation on client co-operation in rehabilitation.

Coordination of the disability systems is, however, often problematic for both users and professionals of rehabilitation. The start of rehabilitation can be delayed due to unresolved issues about who is responsible for the organisation or the financing of the rehabilitation. The rehabilitation can also be cut as the service user moves from one service unit to another. From the point of view of the person with disability, rehabilitation is a separate special unit within the different systems of services and health care. Consequently, the rehabilitation path followed by the person with disabilities is composed of a combination of services and benefits from many different sources. For the person undergoing rehabilitation to receive the services he or

she needs, at the right time and in the right place, a contact person or service guidance would be necessary.

The existing legislation on rehabilitation must be fully utilised. Through good execution, the provisions can significantly improve the seamless execution of various rehabilitation measures. Although waiting times for the rehabilitation and for the assessment of the need for technical aids are regulated in the 2005 reform of the provisions on maximum waiting times to health care, it is often necessary for clients to wait for both access to rehabilitation and the service needs assessment. The act on the status and the rights of patients was amended six years ago to include an obligation to draft a plan regarding the treatment, care and medical rehabilitation of the patient in cooperation with the patient. Problems have been caused by the fact that rehabilitation funded by the Social Insurance Institution KELA for persons with severe disabilities currently ends when the patient reaches the age of 65.

From that point onwards, the responsibility for the organisation of rehabilitation for clients over the age of 65, falls on the public health care system. In the proposals prepared by the Social Protection Reform SATA Committee concerning rehabilitation and in the preparation of the new health care, these problems have been raised.

The need for technical aids is growing as the number of elderly persons, also persons with severe disabilities, is increasing, combined with the increased possibilities brought by the new technologies. Notwithstanding that the availability of technical aids has been improved in recent years and practices are becoming more unified across the country, still many people – for example, a large number of adults who have lost capacity to speak either partially or totally – are left without functioning technical aids for communication. More and more money is used in the public health care on technical

aids. However, many municipalities are waiting for recommendations more specific than the quality recommendations for rehabilitation services from 2003. Also, a unified set of national criteria to collect information about technical aids from hospital districts would be needed. Further, those who are responsible for rehabilitation need continuous and timely information about the possibilities provided by technical aids and new technologies. In disputed decisions about technical aids, the use of processes, such as complaints, is time-consuming and from the point of view of the complainant the process does not render a good result.

### *Objective and directions of development*

Through health care measures, a significant support can be provided for persons to be more autonomous, have a high quality of life and have the strength to continue in the working life. All citizens, including persons with severe disabilities, have the right to health care services of quality, to appropriate care and to the monitoring of health status.

Persons who belong to rare disability groups have a higher risk than others to be excluded from quality primary health services. According to a recommendation by the Council of Europe, member states should draw up and accept as soon as possible, but no later than 2013, a national strategy to guide and organise the measures concerning the most essential rare diseases within social services and health care. It is important that Finland also draws up and executes this kind of a strategy. A precondition for well-functioning health services is the right of the patient to become heard and the right to participate in decision-making concerning one's own health or treatment. It is very important that accessibility in its many forms can be ensured in facilities for healthcare, both in

primary and specialist services. In the future, more attention should be paid in the various health care units to ensuring that persons with different disabilities become heard and understood as users of services. For example, a person with visual impairment will need information about the waiting times by way of calls based on auditory signals, whereas persons with hearing impairments and sometimes even persons with speech impairments will benefit from information in a visual format. A person with intellectual disability using health services might need personal assistance and support as well as clear information and sufficiently long consultation times so that the functioning of the communication will be ensured.

From an early stage on, medical rehabilitation complements and makes more effective the measures of medical and vocational rehabilitation and other services supporting a person's capacity to work and function. The aim of rehabilitation is to improve or maintain the person's capacity to function and work as well as to be able to manage independently in different life situations.

A prerequisite for a well-functioning and effective rehabilitation from the point of view of the person in rehabilitation is to fit together the services provided by the various actors providing rehabilitation or financing it. An obligation to cooperate has been laid down in legislation for authorities and other actors organising rehabilitation. The legislation on client co-operation in rehabilitation has the purpose to assist the client in such a way that he or she will receive the rehabilitation services he or she needs and to promote co-operation between the authorities and other communities and institutions in a situation requiring actions by several parties organising rehabilitation. In order to improve the smooth running of the whole rehabilitation framework, several measures have been adopted to concretise the basic policy decisions on rehabilitation and rehabilita-

tion services, to specify the procedures and the way in which the services are organised between various actors as well as to clarify the right of the client to receive service and income during the rehabilitation.

Technical aids services are produced in both primary health care and specialist health care. Technical aids services are part of treatment and rehabilitation, and they should, according to the treatment and rehabilitation plan, be a part of a seamless chain of services. The starting point should be that rehabilitation and technical aids as well as treatment equipment must meet the individual needs of the person and that they are available and of good quality. Technical aids have such a high significance for persons with disabilities that, in the future, it will be important not only to ensure the availability of technical aids, but also to ensure how the rights of clients of technical aids services are protected in contested cases. It is essential for the person with disabilities and, if needed, persons close to him or her to be fully involved in the design and decision-making about rehabilitation and technical aid issues concerning him or her.

### *The measures to be realised (2010–2015)*

It is the responsibility of the administrative sector under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, partially in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Transport and Communication to increase the accessibility of health services and to ensure that those services are available on an equal basis to all citizens.

The responsibility for the functioning and development of rehabilitation is divided between several administrative sectors: the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health/social welfare and health care, the Social Insurance Institution, Kela, authorised pension providers and accident

insurance institutions and motor liability insurance institutions, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy/employment administrative sector and the Ministry of Culture and Education/education administrative sector.

The availability and functioning of technical aids services is primarily the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, but in matters relating education and employment administrative sector it works in close cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Education and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy.

The preparation of the national strategy that guides measures in the area of social welfare and health care for rare disability groups is the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

### 3.8 SOCIAL WELFARE

#### *Presentation of the thematic area, its significance and current situation*

Everyone has the right to basic subsistence. Work is the primary source of subsistence and a way to influence one's own economic position. Social welfare acts as a guarantee of wellbeing and security when work, for various reasons, is not possible. In practice, social welfare is an essential support of income and social participation for persons with severe disabilities, in particular. A permanently low level of income security forms a barrier to a fully-fledged participation in society of persons with disabilities and persons with long-term illnesses.

The way in which the various parts of social security are coordinated in a formulaic manner breaks the foundation of building a good life and a life of independence. The problems in the cooperation between the various

administrative sectors directing and executing social security are manifested to the clients by way of splintered information on social security, causing a lot of trouble for and insecurity in clients and even restricting the effective use of social security.

### *Objective and directions of development*

Social security is the secondary way to ensure the welfare of citizens in working age and to level social inequalities. Its significance as something that enables the social participation of persons with disabilities and their equality and prevents social exclusion continues to be of vital importance in the future. The level of social security must be sufficient. The starting point in decision-making concerning social security must be the life situation and individual needs of the person.

In order to ensure the functioning of social security and to remedy existing problem areas, the compatibility between the various parts of social security must be further developed, that is, how the different parts together and in the right time best can meet the needs of the client. Furthermore, more detailed information is needed on the significance and effectiveness of social security in the lives of persons with disabilities. For persons with disabilities who live on national pension for the whole of their working age, it is especially important that sufficient income is secured. For various reasons, these persons have not had equal opportunities to influence their own economic independence or their living conditions compared to what most of the other citizens have. The level of the minimum pension must be reasonable so that persons with disabilities have the prerequisites to act as full citizens without discrimination.

During the time of vocational rehabilitation, the objective is to make integrated use of the employment



services system so that disabled persons can also make full and effective use of it. Especially with young persons being rehabilitated to work, the use of opportunities offered by the employment services system must be the basic starting point.

### *The measures to be realised (2010–2015)*

For the functioning as well as the issues relative to co-ordination between the various parts of social security, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and its administrative sector is responsible; key partners in this co-operation are the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and the Ministry of Education and Culture.

## 3.9 LEGAL PROTECTION, SECURITY AND INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON

### *Presentation of the thematic area, its significance and current situation*

Everyone has the right to have his or her case appropriately dealt with by a legally competent court of law or other authority. Everyone has the right to be heard and to have a decision provided with motivation. Everyone has the right to integrity and security. Everyone also has the right to privacy.

The protection of persons with disabilities is often realised in a deficient way. It is often difficult, even impossible, to report a crime, give evidence or to start investigations in cases of violence, abuse or discrimination against persons with disabilities. The deficiencies relating to security and the protection of the individual integrity are especially serious factors

causing inequality because the risk for persons with disabilities to become victims of violence and abuse is greater for other persons. This is particularly true of women and girls with disabilities. Children and young persons with disabilities run a greater risk than their peers of harassment in the community of children. In situations of crisis, emergency or accidents, ensuring the security of persons with disabilities may ultimately be left to chance. Also, the possibilities of persons with disabilities to raise alarm or receive it are often poorer than those of other citizens, or non-existent.

### *Objective and directions of development*

Democratic society develops the protection of the law and other protection, assistance and security measures in crisis and emergency situations in such a way that they are available to all persons to the largest extent possible and in the most effective manner.

It is necessary to prevent violence, abuse and discrimination faced by persons with disabilities through a wide range of measures. This will include strengthening the monitoring of legal protection, recognition of acts of violence and discrimination, systematic training of staff, information and awareness-raising activities as well as research involving persons with disabilities themselves. Abuse can be directed either physically towards the person or indirectly through functioning in such a way that, for example in the working life, abuse can take place through the way in which wages are agreed or work assignments divided. The capabilities of persons with disabilities to report crimes and to give evidence must be made stronger by developing new methods for reporting and giving evidence, when need be by changing the relevant legislation.

The security of persons with disabilities must be ensured by way of positive action measures, adaptations and preventive measures, where necessary. Through extensive work to promote accessibility, including the development of legislation and guidance, it is possible to enhance security and to prevent infringements of personal integrity. This means that the built environment must be well designed and executed, that a variety of measures is used for communication and for raising alarm and that interpreters and modern information and communication technology are available and usable. To increase the knowledge of the personnel in private security firms about persons with disabilities and to extend their professional capabilities present a major challenge to better functioning emergency and security services.

It is necessary to engage the expertise of persons with disabilities in the design and execution of security and emergency services training. It is also important that persons with disabilities, in the same way as other citizens, can take part in security and emergency trainings.

### *The measures to be realised (2010–2015)*

The preconditions for the realisation as well as the maintenance of social and individual legal protections security and personal integrity are the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior in co-operation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Employment and the Economy and the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, alongside the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior, have the possibility through their own actions to influence in a positive way the development of security issues in international crisis situ-

ations and humanitarian assistance from the point of view of disability policy.

### 3.10 CULTURE AND LEISURE

#### *Presentation of the thematic area, its significance and current situation*

The Finnish society produces a variety of services in the area of culture and leisure. Sports and leisure activities, art, travel and library services are meant for the refreshment and use of all citizens of all ages, as something to build welfare and social participation. Persons with disabilities participate in the activities of culture and other leisure activities in many roles, both as service users and – more and more often today – as professionals in these fields.

The possibilities of participation for persons with disabilities have improved, albeit slowly. Major barriers to participation include inaccessible buildings, facilities and other environments, due to, for example, deficient transport services as well as uncertain and often random availability of means and modes of communication and information. There is a need to develop the adaptation and integration of the building provisions (for example, FI and G1) so that they would provide sufficient support for the realisation of accessible sports services.

#### *Objective and directions of development*

In an open society, a variety of cultural and leisure services will strengthen the well-being and inclusion of all citizens. The starting point is that persons with disabili-

ties participate in the activities of culture and leisure together with others; measures already started to develop sports and cultural services for all must be continued.

It should be possible for persons with disabilities to exercise sports or other activities regularly in a similar way than others do. This requires a seamless whole of sports services, well-functioning travel services and accessible sports venues. Having access to professional sports guidance is important for persons with disabilities. The number of trained sports advisers and the amount of information about the adaptability of various forms of sports and their opportunities must be increased. When necessary, reasonable accommodation measures and special services must be used to support existing sports services. The purpose will be, however, that well-functioning special services in no occasion reduce either what is considered as a normal interaction between people or taking other people into consideration. Communality is one of the foundations of the society.

The use of cultural services and the attendance to cultural events both require a seamless whole consisting of accessible travel to the event, accessible environment, accessible event, accessible place of the event and accessible facilities and services. Especially in the area of cultural and library services, the possibilities of new information and communication technology can be adapted with good results in such a way that also clients with disabilities can draw benefits from cultural services to a larger extent than what has been the case until now.

It is important that persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, have opportunities to be creators and producers of culture, as well. This requires equal opportunities for entering the education in the fields of culture and the arts and to become employed there.

## *The measures to be realised (2010–2015)*

Equal access for all to the culture and leisure services is the primary responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture, in co-operation with the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

### 3.11 DISCRIMINATION FACED BY PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

#### *Presentation of the thematic area, its significance and current situation*

No one should, without justifiable ground, be placed in a different position on the basis of the person's characteristics or disability. Persons with disability face both direct and indirect discrimination in our society. Direct discrimination means that an individual or group is treated differently from others on the basis of a forbidden ground of discrimination. Direct discrimination is punishable under criminal law. Indirect discrimination takes place in a situation where a treatment, procedure, practice or decision which is apparently neutral will, however, lead to discriminatory end results; for example, a group in an unequal position. Social structural discrimination faced by persons with disabilities includes, for example, inaccessible buildings and services and barriers to the opportunities to use information and communication technology on an equal basis.

Persons with disabilities have, at all ages, a greater risk of becoming discriminated in various life situations. Some persons with disabilities are faced with a risk of multiple discrimination. In particular, women and girls with disabilities, immigrants with disabili-

ties, persons belonging to linguistic, cultural or sexual minorities as well as children and elderly people with disabilities are at risk of facing discrimination on more than one ground.

In practice, equality and inclusion are in many ways bound with the general climate of attitudes and values in the society. Discrimination is a complex phenomenon. It varies in terms of its expressions, recognition and consequences. Nevertheless, it should not be accepted in any form.

Over the years, our social values and attitudes have changed and, in many ways, progress has been made. Nevertheless, in order to combat and eradicate discrimination, more long-term work in many forms is needed. Especially, the eradication of indirect discrimination requires a lot of work, and it is also necessary to keep improving the recognition of various forms of discrimination.

### *Objective and directions of development*

One of the key objectives of disability policy is to influence positively the values and attitudes prevailing in the society. Strengthening of attitudes and values which promote diversity will produce sustainable disability policy. Influencing attitudes is a long-term activity. It should start from daycare centres and schools. It is important that children, during pre-primary education, receive positive experiences of working together and learning together with different persons. Encountering diversity should be made a strong part of daily interaction between people. All persons are valuable, all persons have capacities and skills. The opportunities of everyone to develop their skills should be reinforced.

The various administrative sectors have an obligation to improve disability policy awareness, attitudes

and values of their personnel. More information about both discrimination and ways to combat is needed for actors in both the public and private sector, for persons with disabilities themselves and their family members. Especially the personnel in education and leisure while working with children and young people play a central role in raising awareness of the whole age group. Contents of studies in vocational training and in the universities must be developed in such a way that they take into consideration the perspectives of equality and non-discrimination. The objective is to give professionals from various fields as well as designers and developers better capabilities to promote non-discrimination in society.

Should a unified set of criteria be developed for positive measures to support awareness-raising across administrative sectors? These criteria could, for example, direct the development of the role of employer in recruitment across administrative sectors. In terms of personnel structure, the objective would be diversity. Accordingly, there would be persons with disabilities in risk of multiple discrimination among the employees. As a practical first step, administrative sectors have the possibility to recruit persons with disabilities, including persons vulnerable to the risk of multiple discrimination, as trainees for summer, for example. The ministries could provide good examples for employers.

The starting point for client work for both administrative sector the authorities and for the private sector is treating all clients and service users equally. It is important to combine the knowledge of the professional personnel and the clients' expertise to produce services which are more equal, more safe and more beneficial to the client. Equal use of the service requires that the service itself as well as the transport and other environments enabling its use would all be accessible. Sys-



tematic combatting of discrimination and dealing with related problems must be strengthened. Effective systematic combating of discrimination requires that all administrative sector set up systems to monitor and report on discrimination.

### *The measures to be realised (2010–2015)*

The guidance and execution of non-discrimination planning is coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior. Each administrative sector is responsible for systematic training of their staff as well as for strengthening of the accessibility work in their own activities.

## 3.12 INFORMATION BASE

### *Presentation of the thematic area, its significance and current situation*

#### *Disability research*

The tradition of disability research is rather young in Finland. The first pieces of research, which primarily dealt with the needs of disabled war veterans and with the care of persons with intellectual disabilities, were completed in the 1950s. Traditionally, the emphasis in disability studies has been with medical research. Since then, some interest in disability research has been emerging in educational sciences and social sciences. In the past few years, the area of disability research has been extending to the fields of legal, linguistic and sports research. In the future, there will be a need to extend disability research to the areas of, for example, the arts and equality as well as information and com-

munication technology research. Finnish disability research is dispersed across various faculties and, so far, lacks an independent status among sciences.

In terms of quantity, disability research has increased over the last years, but it still remains relatively low in number. The latest disability research has produced both theoretical and empirical information about living as a person with disability. A theme binding these studies together is the barriers persons with disabilities face, which restrict or prevent participation in society on an equal basis with others. Another research theme emerging extensively is the connection of people with different disabilities to their own culture, their mutual connection and also their connection to the rest of society. Persons with disabilities themselves have been involved in research activities to some extent, but not in a systematic way.

As a whole, the Finnish disability research can be characterised as suffering from divisions and being broken into small parts, perhaps, a certain unevenness in terms of its level in some content areas. However, in some subject areas, the research is of a rather good level of quality. Comparing internationally, one such area of good quality is research into the rights of persons with disabilities.

Disability research has been made both in the universities, across administrative sectors as well as in research and development institutions, increasingly also in municipalities in the regions and in disability NGOs.

The choice of research targets has often been guided by external research needs rather than needs internal to science or theory development. Apart from research, a rather extensive development work has also been conducted. For example, awareness raising projects in relation to accessibility in society have been realised through co-operation projects across administrative

sectors either nationally or at the level of European or Nordic countries. Also, special services have been developed in regional co-operation between many actors.

Over the last few years, the first impact assessment projects regarding disability policy have been realised. They are, however, individual pilot projects, and the work to assess the impacts of disability policies, is at very early stages.

## *Statistics*

Statistics concerning disability are maintained by Statistics Finland and the National Institute of Welfare and Health under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, which, on the basis of municipal activities and financials statistics, publishes yearly statistics on the number of persons receiving services as well as on the number of persons with intellectual disabilities in institutional or family care and the number of persons with intellectual disabilities who are working. Information on the supply and demand for services as well as the need for services has been produced by way of individual surveys. There is a separate register kept on malformations, and the Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired keeps a separate register on all persons with visual impairment. Apart from the statistics authorities, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Social Insurance Institution KELA keep statistics on the activities of their area of expertise. The statistical information available is related to, for example, special education, incapacity to work, and disability benefits and rehabilitation. Deficiencies in the statistics weaken the capabilities of planning and decision-making systems across administrative sectors to tackle problems related to participation and equality.

There is no exact information available on the prevalence of disability in the Finnish population. The prevalence of disability was last studied in the early 1980s. The review has been sufficient to give the necessary picture on the prevalence of disability at the national level over the last few years. Statistics produced by the Social Insurance Institution KELA on the number of disability pensions and disability benefits has been used to describe the prevalence of disability at the level of regions and municipalities, as well.

### *Objective and directions of development*

In the future, it is going to be increasingly important that the interaction between disability research and decision-making is further strengthened so that a sustainable basis can be created for the just social position of persons with disabilities. We need more information about how the rights of persons with disabilities are realised and how discrimination on the grounds of disability manifests itself in society. The information we now have available on the living conditions of persons with disabilities, their economic situation and their health status is very limited in its extent. What kind of development has there been in the relationship between persons with disabilities using general services and persons with disabilities using special services? To what extent is freedom of choice realised in the use of basic services and, overall, to what extent is realised the chance to use services open for the general public? In which way the various pieces of legislation, other guidance documents, strategies and guidelines take into consideration their impacts in terms of disability policy?

It is important that the number of researchers with disabilities be increased. The objective is to increase the opportunities for research of young students and

researchers with disabilities working at the universities or research institutes. The opportunities should be increased in different fields of science, including multisectoral disability research. In the future, it will be necessary in research to hear the voice of persons with disabilities themselves to a more systematic extent. They are versatile experts on disability through experience. In particular, information about the realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in practice, the living conditions and the quality of life of persons with disabilities can only be acquired by gathering it from persons with disabilities themselves.

Taking into account the impacts of disability policy in all design, especially in legislative drafting and implementation of legislation is a way of mainstreaming disability policy. By way of assessing the impacts of legislative provisions and other actions in advance, it is possible to prevent discrimination and improve the conditions for equality. In the future, what is needed is further development of assessment metrics. Furthermore, reliable qualitative and quantitative measurements, the development of indicators and their introduction into use are needed for monitoring.

For a number of years, Finnish disability researchers have discussed how to unite the multisectoral disability research into a comprehensive and integral research activity. This still remains an urgent challenge. As a systematic and long-term solution, a separate chair of disability studies supporting disability research would promote basic research in a significant way. It would also support the promotion of disability policy in practice. The activity could be started in phases. The first phase could be the design and realisation of multisectoral master's programme in cooperation between universities. Examples of multisector disability research and its organisation are available in particular in the Anglo-Saxon countries.

## *Statistics*

One way to support the promotion of mainstreaming policy would be developing new, more systematic and more focused methods of information collection as well as statistics in various administrative sectors.

For example, deficiencies in the statistical basis of social and health care as well as in employment services make it more difficult to evaluate the emerging service needs or services which have been realised cannot be grouped with sufficient precision. In the employment services and in the education sector, information about disabled jobseekers are included in a whole that includes several other groups, as well. The service needs of persons with disabilities are individual, developing in accordance with, for example, the life course. This is why it is important to continue the production of statistics divided along age groups for special services, as well.

The need for special services is divided in many ways, often randomly across municipalities and regions. If the statistical data on services were made more varied in nature, it would improve service development, service provision and cost evaluation.

## *The measures to be realised (2010–2015)*

Strengthening the position of disability research, creating conditions for its long-term sustainable development and preserving its multisectoral nature is the responsibility of each administrative sector for its own part. Stronger interaction between decision-making and research requires co-operation between administrative sectors and its co-ordination. At the national level, collection and production of statistics is the responsibility of Statistics Finland in co-operation with, for example, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy.

### 3.13 REPLACING TAX SUBSIDIES BY DIRECT PAYMENTS SUPPORT

#### *Presentation of the thematic area, its significance and current situation*

Persons with disabilities are entitled to the services and support measures open to all in accordance to their needs. In case the universal services do not meet his or her needs, the person with disabilities has a right to have special services and support measures. The arrangement of these measures fall under the subjective duty of the municipality, or they are limited by the amount of resources available. The person with disabilities has a subjective right to services falling under the special obligation of organisation by the municipalities.

Persons with a severe disability are very dependent on the services arranged through public funding. In the municipalities, some issues, such as meeting the needs of special services or the costs of production of service, have been considered problematic, as municipalities have significant costs from the organisation of services for people with multiple or severe disabilities. These costs are formed by expensive special services, support measures, technical aids and equipment which can all be needed by one and same individual.

#### *Objective and directions of development*

What is needed is a versatile selection of instruments so as to ensure that the services are available, and of high quality regardless of the municipality of the client or his or her disability. To develop an active disability policy, we propose additional funding for special services. These can be ensured by redirecting resources now used for the maintenance of tax subsidies in a new way.

This would mean the elimination of disability reduction in national and municipal taxation and redirection of it towards a more active disability policy

### *The measures to be realised (2010–2015)*

Redirecting of the resources used for tax subsidies to active disability policy is the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in co-operation with the Ministry of Finance.

## 3.14 INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

### *Presentation of the thematic area, its significance and current situation*

Disability policy is international by its nature, and its starting points and goals are global. Especially the United Nations, European Union, Council of Europe, Nordic Council of Ministers and Nordic Council agreements, resolutions recommendations and co-operation processes have influenced and continue to influence the direction of Finnish disability policy, as well.

Several Finnish disability organisations are experienced actors in their international co-operation in disability policy. They have development co-operation projects, especially in the countries and disability organisations of central and Eastern Africa, Latin America, Asia and Eastern Europe. The European and global co-operation and action networks have been working actively since the 1980s.



## *Objective and directions of development*

The significance of international co-operation for national disability policy and the way this policy has been drawn up over the years has been high. The obligations of international co-operation are binding for Finland as a party to the agreements and provide a new perspective to the work of various actors in national policy. The international monitoring as well as the securing of legal safeguards will support a responsible and long-term Finnish disability policy.

International cooperation offers ways and several processes where disability policy issues important to us can be raised in a larger debate and in monitoring. In its foreign relations, Finland aims at making the realisation of rights of persons with disabilities more effective by way of mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities as a part of normal functioning within various sectors of policy and activity. The rights of persons with disabilities will be included in national and international programmes and guidelines, including regional and local projects in development policy.

Finland promotes the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of the European Union, United Nations, international development funding organisations, Council of Europe, and Organisation of Security and Co-Operation in Europe as well as other human rights systems. The drafting of the Government Disability Policy Programme (VAMPO) will support the integral national promotion and execution of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Finnish disability organisations hold a significant role as actors in the disability policy development work in support of disability NGOs and governments in developing countries. Also international co-operation in the area of disability policy among educational institu-

tions in neighbouring areas of Finland and in many developing countries has been both ground-breaking and successful. Continuing the co-operation on the basis of these achievements is natural and necessary.

Notwithstanding the central role of disability organisations, the primary responsibility regarding the protection and execution of the rights of persons with disabilities under international treaties rests with the governments. The obligations of governments as well as the rights belonging to every person with disabilities, must be brought clearly forward in both international co-operation between governments and between organisations.

### *The measures to be realised (2010–2015)*

The promotion of disability policy as a crosscutting theme in the processes, programmes, projects and various fora of international cooperation is primarily the responsibility of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and, according to the contents of the action, other administrative sectors as well. Among the actors of international disability policy and development policy are Finnish organisations and educational institutions.

## 4 THE IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE GOVERNMENT DISABILITY POLICY PROGRAMME

### 4.1 IMPLEMENTATION

The central actors in the implementation of Disability Policy Programme are the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Finance. Some of the measures the ministries will implement themselves, others will be the responsibility of administrative sectors, institutions or other organisations within the Ministry's sphere of authority. The implementation is agreed on during negotiations over what achievements are expected for each year, through other agreements on division of responsibilities and by way of the method of ministerial guidance.

The actions of these nine administrative sectors have a crucial importance in the implementation of the Disability Policy Programme. The essential guidelines for disability policies, their design, guidance and strategic implementation will be realised within these administrative sectors.

The implementation of the programme requires further preparation, more detailed phasing and resourcing for several concrete measures within each administrative sector. It is necessary to integrate the phasing into the implementation timetable agreed on in the programme. The costs of measures and how they are spread out over a number of years will be clarified in the course of

preparation within administrative sectors. It is also to be agreed how the costs will be divided and which forms of cooperation will be used across administrative sectors.

Some of these measures in the Disability Policy Programme require a significant commitment over a number of years. The objective will be to prepare these measures within each administrative sector so that these could be considered as part of the next government programmes.

It is important that the leading administrators in the administrative sectors will in the future to a larger extent and more clearly than before include the disability policy dimension as part of their own work. As an example of work in the right direction is the work on gender equality. The gender equality perspective has already been included in the work of various sectors across administrative sectors. The inclusion and consideration of the rights and opportunities of women and girls with disabilities in the framework of gender equality work still continues to present a challenge.

Within administrative sectors, expertise on disability policy must be strengthened by increasing the opportunities for experts in various sectors to have interaction with each other. Co-operation between administrative sectors in a more systematic way than before will strengthen the effective realisation of the measures, add to their impact and enable their monitoring in many ways.

## 4.2 MONITORING

### 4.2.1 Disability Policy Programme (2010–2015)

Monitoring the implementation of the measures in the Disability Policy Programme requires active measures of the administrative sectors. The primary responsibil-

ity for monitoring rests with each administrative sector responsible for the individual measure. The preparation for the coordination of monitoring will be started immediately after the programme has been completed. At the early stages, the coordination body is the National Council on Disability (VANE). Its members include representatives from seven different ministries, disability organisations, the National Institute of Welfare and Health and the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities. Based on this preparation work, a separate agreement will be concluded on issues such as overall implementation, coordination of work, more specified foci for work as well as the timetable.

During the first stage of monitoring, emphasis will be on those five measures which have been designated as primary measures in the programme. These include: 1) The preparation and implementation of legislative amendments necessary for the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; 2) The improvement of the socio-economic position of persons with disabilities and the combating of poverty; 3) Ensuring the availability and quality of special services and support measures in different parts of the country; 4) Extensive improvement of accessibility in society; and 5) The strengthening of the position of disability research, the increase of information base and the development of diverse quality methods to implement and monitor disability policy.

All the measures mentioned above, include several concrete measures which will need the commitment of several administrative sectors and are timed over a period of many years. This is why it is necessary to negotiate and agree among different parties on how the specific focus of monitoring is set and timed. Regularly collected quantitative and cost data for their part serve the purpose of monitoring. Quantitative or qualitative

other data, for example, individual surveys on particular issues or data produced in the local-level welfare reports may also be usable material supporting the purpose of monitoring.

#### 4.2.2 Disability policy

The methods for the long-term monitoring of disability policy will have to be developed further in the future. What is needed are indicators and trustworthy meters which can help in the monitoring of social developments and the progress of nondiscrimination and justice. It is also necessary to develop reliable and usable indicators to evaluate the functioning of disability policy in addition to implementation. They would also help in further design and evaluation of policy measures. The development of indicators must be made in cooperation with disability organisations. What is also needed is information about the personal experiences of persons with disabilities, the progress of measures and the achievement of the objectives sought.

Questionnaires, barometres and other measurements developed for various purposes should be extended in such a way that they would also provide information on the social participation and equality of persons with disabilities and the development taking place in these areas. National monitoring of, for example, social exclusion, living conditions, health conditions and monitoring of progress in equality or the number of hate crimes can provide significant important background for the monitoring of disability policy measures and objectives.

#### 4.2.3 Monitoring of the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities

Finland has signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its optional protocol. The Disability Policy Programme is part of the implementation of the UN Convention.

The implementation of the Convention is monitored both nationally and at the international level. The implementation is monitored by a committee set up by the Convention (article 34). The tasks of the committee include, for example, the examining of the state reports and the issuance of general recommendations and suggestions. The optional protocol sets up a individual complaints mechanism over the rights covered in the Convention as well as enquiry procedure focusing on states parties (article 6). At the national level, a national focal point is nominated to implement the Convention. It is also necessary to consider the setting up or the nomination of the national coordination system as well as to maintain or strengthen a structure which includes where necessary one or more independent mechanisms and which is to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the Convention, or to nominate or set up such a structure (article 33).

As a member of the European Union, Finland is also committed to EU regulations.

Finland will encourage the active participation of the civil society, in particular, of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in the monitoring of the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities.

## 5 FINANCING AND RESOURCES OF DISABILITY POLICY

The basis of Finnish disability policy and its financing is Nordic welfare thinking.

The objective is to ensure the services that citizens need regardless of their economic or social status. Public services will be primarily funded through tax revenue. The government will participate in the funding of services organised by municipalities by way of state subsidies.

A starting point of an economically sustainable disability policy is that the whole society, its services and support measures are available for all. When public general service systems are well-functioning, the need for special services is lower than before or it will be delayed to a later point in time. By developing the general services, we influence the formation of the cost structure and we can realise an economically sustainable disability policy.

In case the general services are unable to meet the need for services, persons with disabilities have a right to special services and support measures. These measures either fall under the specific obligation for municipalities to organise or they are dependent on the available funding. As regards the services under the municipality's special obligation to organise, the person with disability has a subjective right to receive those services. Especially in small municipalities, the organisation and funding of expensive special services may have been problematic due to both a lack of financing and a lack of professional personnel available.



The need to reform the model of financing for disability services has been on the agenda for a long time. One essential objective has been to find solutions to secure a strong enough basis for those disability services which are under the responsibility of municipalities. To secure the funding, proposals have been made, including a redirection of tax subsidies and the linking of social insurance to the balancing of costs. The model last mentioned introduced in connection with the new interpretation service legislation in 2010. In addition, in 2006, a specific disability factor has been introduced and new co-operation across regions has been developed alongside new methods of action in order to produce and organise the services. So far, little research information is available on the effects of reforms already made on the level of costs, resources or the availability of disability services.

Of the 122 measures in the Disability Policy Programme, more than a half can be realised across administrative sectors without introducing additional funding. It is all about rearranging methods of action, more efficient realisation and the strengthening of cooperation. At first stage, this requires work by the authorities and solutions that are cost neutral. Almost a quarter of the action measures in the programme cause a need for additional funding. It is already possible to assess some of these cost effects. For many measures, the cost impact assessment requires a more detailed planning of the realisation as well as a phasing of the action. The starting point is that the measures of this programme will be realised in the framework of the budget agreed by the Government and the yearly budgets. The programme proposes that special services be provided with additional funding. This will be ensured by redirecting resources currently used for tax subsidies towards a more active disability policy.

Securing a financially sustainable disability policy requires, apart from securing of financial basis, a sufficient number of qualified professional personnel, co-operation between various actors and the organisation of service processes and structures in such a way that they support the objectives sought. For good social design and planning, it is essential that municipalities, regions and other actors of the private sector and in society have at their disposal a sufficient amount of disability policy expertise. Municipal disability councils are a significant resources in the regions and in the municipalities where they already are active. The disability councils have broad expertise in disability. In the future, their expertise must be made available more extensively. This is the only way to make progress in the societal design which has the objective that municipal residents with disabilities have an equal, just and fair position in society.

## 6 TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE DISABILITY POLICY

The Disability Policy Programme is meant to strengthen the development trends in society by supporting the realisation in practice of a just social position for person with disabilities.

The objective of measures and thematic content areas is the mainstreaming of disability policy, strengthening the diversity in attitudes and values, the respect for diversity and the increase and improvement of accessibility in society. Long-term disability policy can be realised only through the use of quality measures and instruments. The Disability Policy Programme also pays special attention to the special services as services of a fundamental nature; the functioning of the special services is the primary factor in deciding to what extent and how the rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities are realised in practice.

### 6.1 SELF-DETERMINATION AND FREEDOM OF CHOICE

The respect for the opinion and will of persons with disabilities as well as individuality and freedom of choice are the cornerstones of modern disability policy. The programme includes several measures with the objective of ensuring the realisation of self-determination for persons with disabilities in different ages on an equal basis with their peers. As examples of measures that

promote this objective are: *the realisation of the right to choose the municipality of residence, the implementation of the system ensuring personal assistance, client-centred guidance of service design, ensuring that legislation concerning guardianship and practice on guardianship are appropriately linked to the disability policy as well as the reform of the regulations concerning the right to self-determination and its limitations, so as to strengthen the legislation through reform.*

The right to self-determination refers to the right of a person independently to consider and make decisions as well as to act on issues concerning him or her. In case resources – capabilities or powers – to express one's own wishes are lacking, it is necessary and usually possible to support the person with disability in such a way that the decisions can be made in agreement with him or her. Supported decision-making is the term that describes this kind of activity. More extensive use of the term will make it more widely known and support its further development.

The cornerstones of the Disability Policy Programme are the respect of the opinion and will of the person with disability, freedom of expression and individuality. The right to one's own culture and the use of the official languages of Finland with the authorities and in using the services in accordance with national languages legislation are an essential part of the individual's right to self-determination and freedom of choice. This means that, alongside the availability of services, the information available concerning those services must also be produced in accordance with the legislation on national languages. The opinion of the child with disability must be respected in the same way as that of an adult. In the realisation of the right to self-determination and the freedom of choice of a small child, the parents or other person close to the child are the advocates for him or her.

## 6.2 ATTITUDES AND VALUES

In the programme, there are several measures that aim at creating room for diversity and the respect for difference in society. Persons with disabilities, children as well as adults, women as well as men, are entitled to be disabled with full rights and obligations in society. Changes are brought about by the use of an extensive array of measures: education and information, strengthening professional capabilities, amending regulations, guidance and concepts that are in conflict with modern disability political approach and strengthening the knowledge base and the use of knowledge. Examples of activities are: *correction of concepts and terms in conflict with modern disability policy, strengthening the awareness of professional personnel across administrative sectors about accessibility and equality, for example in the sectors of justice, security, education, health care, construction and environmental design as well as foreign affairs.*

All persons have the right to be active in their communities and in the society in such a way as to realise equality in practice, as well. The programme aspires to strengthen a participatory development of society. It also includes measures that aim at ensuring opportunities in such a way that persons with disabilities can also fulfil their obligations as members of society. The programme includes examples of such measures in relation to *civil rights, voting, working and education.*

To bring about a change in society in terms of values and attitudes relative to disability policy requires of all administrative sectors – and of other societal actors as well – to realise measures which are consequential and which are to be realised through predetermined mid-term targets. The objective of the work done in relation to attitudes and values is influencing the prevalent values and understanding in such a way that all people

can build the society together. The disability-related needs will be taken into consideration as part of the mainstream design and implementation. Accessible environments, functioning services and usable products will strengthen both equality between people and non-discrimination.

The strengthening of the attitudes and values that respect diversity in society will produce sustainable disability policy. The work on attitudes will support and lay the foundation for other sustainable paths of development. For example, for a person with disability to work and to be able to continue to work, it is not only essential that the information relative to the workplace and the work itself is accessible, but also that people are treated well at the workplace and that there is a good attitudinal climate both in the workplace and in society as a whole.

### 6.3 ACCESSIBLE FINLAND

The programme requires strong inputs in the accessibility of the Finnish society over the next few years. With this programme, we can strengthen the social, cultural, ecological and economic sustainability of the society as well as its justice and fairness. The objective is to ensure through diverse measures the design, realisation and implementation of services, environments and products in such a way that all people can use them.

The inaccessibility of the environment, movement, information and communication, services and goods is a form of discrimination against persons with disabilities. Discrimination as such is prohibited. It is necessary that we look at the removal of existing inaccessibility and prevention of new inaccessibility as a broad whole. It

is essential to strengthen the multisectoral design for all and its application, the development and research work on accessibility and to further study whether discrimination should be combated by way of normative guidance.

Some of the measures included in the programme require the removal of existing barriers, whereas others require functioning solutions for the future. The former set of measures is represented by the measure obligating all administrative sector *to reconstruct inaccessible facilities by the year 2020*. The latter measures are represented by *development of monitoring of accessible communications policy, further development of accessibility of the electronic services of public administration as well as accessibility of means of public transport*. Examples of the latter kind of measures also include: *guidance for accessible planning, development of legislation concerning new buildings as well as harmonisation of interpretation of accessibility legislation, work to develop new and innovative solutions as well as development of accessibility in relation to work and learning environments, services relative to social welfare and health care as well as sports and culture*.

The objective is to ensure continuous accessible chains of action. This means, for example, that one has the possibility to move fluently and seamlessly between home, workplace, school, places of services and leisure activities as well as their near environments. This means also that all these facilities, places and means of transport between them as well as information about them must be accessible. The prerequisite for a non-discriminatory social development is that the principles of design for all are realised in the various parts of the action chain under the responsibility of various administrative sector. Awareness about accessibility and the strengthening of accessibility should be raised to a similar kind of mainstreaming development in society that we currently have in terms of environmental awareness.

## 6.4 EVALUATION OF DISABILITY POLICY EFFECTS

The programme emphasises the development of qualitative and diverse methods in order to support the implementation and monitoring of disability policy. Through the disability policy impact assessment, all sectors of administrative sector and other social actors can promote systematically the realisation of a just and fair social position of persons with disabilities by advance impact assessment. It will be possible to make more information available about the sought-for effects of the decisions, including potential negative side effects. Advance impact assessment can help to combat possible discriminatory or unequalising effects of decisions.

Impact assessment is essentially realised during the preparations for programmes, projects or new legislation. In the assessment, any such impacts are to be highlighted which the decision would bring about from the perspective of persons with disabilities. Differences in terms of conflicting interests between various groups are brought forward and just overall solutions to them are sought. Impact assessment should be an integral part of the process through which different administrative sectors make decisions and implement them in practice.

There are a limited number of experiences about the disability policy impact assessment (VAMAUS) as part of legislative preparation. Systematic introduction of this assessment method requires that it must be developed further. Also, training supporting the introduction of impact assessment is necessary. In municipal and regional decision-making, it is necessary in the future to strengthen significantly impact assessment of disability policy. At the local level, having the exper-



tise of disability organisations and municipal disability councils involved in the cooperation is a prerequisite for a successful realisation of the assessment.

## 6.5 ENSURING EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

The programme includes several measures with the objective to ensure social inclusion and participation through client centred timely and sufficient special services and support measures. These include, for example, *monitoring the availability and quality of disability services and their continuing development as well as good realisation of the personal assistance system and of the personal service plan*. It is generally not possible to replace special services with other services. Special services and support measures create the prerequisites for the realisation of fundamental rights and for the just and equal social position of persons with disabilities.

## 7 COMMON RESPONSIBILITY

The measures in the programme obligate the various ministries and their administrative sectors to a concrete work in disability policy over the years 2010–2015 and beyond. In order to realise an overall disability policy, alongside the commitment of the public sector, it is necessary that the private sector, too, is fully committed to this goal.

The measures in the programme support the strengthening of shared responsibility between various actors. Essential strategic developers and bearers of responsibility in the field of built environment and information and communication structures are the Ministry of the Environment as well as the Ministry of Transport and Communications alongside with the public and private actors in their field of administrative sector. All ministries are responsible for the development of accessible services insofar as their own activities. It is important that the administrative sectors actively use measures with which they can promote the assumption of responsibility by the private sector. The responsibility for financing the measures in the programme, however, rests with each ministry and its administrative sector.

### 7.1 PUBLIC SECTOR

The government disability policy creates the framework and preconditions for the municipalities and other actors to design and implement disability policy. The government creates the conditions by means of legislation and

administrative guidance. It is the starting point of the programme that the public sector has the leading role in disability policy. The central government in its own work and in its own guidelines shows the example of a responsible leader in disability policy actions towards municipalities other local authorities and the private sector.

In the Disability Policy Programme, there are several measures which aim to ensure that legislation and the rights and obligations it defines, will also belong to persons with disabilities in practice. For example, *to vote requires that the whole event of voting is accessible, not only the act of voting itself and any relevant information, but also travel from home to the voting place and back as well as the securing of voting secrecy*. When necessary, special legislation and reasonable accommodation measures will support and complement other legislation. They will be needed in cases where equal rights and opportunities for the fulfilment of the obligation cannot be ensured in any other way.

For all administrative sectors, bearing sector responsibility means that the disability policy must be systematically woven as a part of the mainstream national, regional and local level planning, decisions and programmes. In some of the measures of the programme, the responsibility of implementation is divided among two or more administrative sectors. As an example of such a divided responsibility are: *the strengthening of the position of disability research, and related strengthening of the participation of persons with disabilities, as well as the increasing and securing of accessibility in the actions of all administrative sectors*.

A significant part of the measures in the programme do not cause any need for additional funding for the administrative sectors. It is all about rearranging activities and the use of available resources in a more efficient way. Part of the measures in the programme emphasise

that results already achieved in some administrative sectors need to be further developed.

Nevertheless, a number of the measures over the next few years are clearly bound with the sufficient funding of the public economy. These include, for example, *ensuring sufficient amount of investment assistance to housing, review of the payment ceiling of client fees in social welfare and health care or revision upwards of the age limit of 65 years for medical rehabilitation for persons with severe disabilities.*

## 7.2 PRIVATE SECTOR

All social actors hold their own responsibility in terms of disability policy. The programme includes measures with which the administrative sectors will promote the possibilities of the private sector to assume responsibility in terms of disability policy. Examples of such measures include *the reform of state subsidy system in such a way that the accessibility of transport and public transport services are realised or that in the guidelines for the security planning in houses and housing corporations the security of persons with disabilities and the necessary actions in times of emergency are fully taken into consideration.* The public sector should draw benefits from and develop a new set of instruments to influence the strengthening of accessibility and non-discrimination work within the private sector.

Actors in the service industry have much interest in increasing their clientele and client satisfaction. The accessibility and smooth functioning of services in retail, or restaurants, hairdressers, tourism, transport, spas, sports, communications, security and other services partly determine how well the service is functioning. For example,

accessibility is not yet a significant economic advantage in the competition, but this is believed to be the case in the future, particularly as the population ages. Know-how of the service sector can in many ways be strengthened. Significant ways of doing so include increasing information and training as well as influencing attitudes.

### 7.3 NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

It is one of the fundamental questions of modern disability policy whether persons with disabilities are the key actors in disability policy. In an open, democratic society, the starting point is that people themselves can influence both their own lives and the development of their community and the society. In support of such decision-making, what are needed are more activities relative to the policy of civil society.

Equally, what is needed is knowledge based on experience on the needs of persons with disabilities and the solutions that best meet those needs. A change in direction will require the improvement of the interaction between the civil society and the public power as well as the strengthening of the prerequisites necessary so that the organisations will be able to act.

The programme emphasises the real participation of the organisations. Their expertise is needed during the preparation of decision-making, in the implementation of the decisions as well as in the monitoring. This is especially true for decision-making directly related to any plans or programmes which directly impact persons with disabilities or which impact their legal, economic, social or cultural position or status in society.

The programme includes several measures which will improve the open debate and cooperation between

organisations representing persons with disabilities and various administrative sectors. Examples include: *work related to the development and practical realisation of information and communication technology and the electric field of communications, the design of housing policy programmes and joint research projects. To ensure and to include the expertise in disability policy in the non-discrimination authority still under preparation* is a very important measure. The objective is to ensure that non-discrimination is taken into consideration to a sufficiently wide extent in the work of the new body.

Almost half of all municipalities in Finland already have at their disposal the diverse experience and expertise of local or regional disability councils. They are not utilised enough, however. The decision-makers may not yet have a strong enough touch on the many benefits that open discussion and interaction will bring to decision-making. It is clear that cooperation will support cohesion in society, improve accessibility and safety of living environments and will be shown as client-centred services, reduced need for special solutions and more cost efficiency. The challenge is how to render the cooperation between the municipalities and the organisations onto a sound and systematic basis. The vitality of the disability councils has a great significance in terms of the opportunities to influence their society, the inclusion and welfare of persons with disabilities.

## 8 CONCLUSION

Finland's Disability Policy Programme (VAMPO) and its 122 action measures form a whole that will create a strong basis for the promotion of Finnish disability policy over the next years.

The programme also outlines social developments which will enable and support the strengthening of the just and equal position in society for persons with disabilities in practice.

The Disability Policy Programme is an ambitious and extensive whole. The inclusion of persons with disabilities and their equality are systematically strengthened in all areas of policy. It is about reorganising disability policy, reorientating the work and systematic monitoring of its implementation. Some of the measures in the programme will correct and remove barriers presently in the way of inclusion and equality. Other measures will support a long-standing activity which will influence the realisation of rights as well as non-discrimination of persons with disabilities.

A sustainable and responsible disability policy will benefit markedly from activities that are in line with the objectives of the programme, but are not as such a part of the programme. Such measures include:

1. Work on the disability policy terminology. Disability is a developing concept. It is bound with the interaction between persons with disabilities themselves, the attitudes of the society and the environment around them. Using common concepts and terminology enables a structured dialogue on disability policy. Common concepts and

terminology will also support a long-standing realisation of the policy as well as the observation of potential needs for amendments. So far, the terminology used in disability policy is, in many parts, illdefined and imprecise.

2. Increasing awareness of disability. In society, more information is needed about disability. It is essential that awareness is promoted about the capabilities and inputs of persons with disabilities in the construction and development of society. Also, information about the effects of various disabilities and illnesses in the lives of people and about the ways to alleviate or remove these effects is needed. An improved awareness will strengthen the development of the preconditions for the social equality and the participation of persons with disabilities. In practice, increasing awareness means campaigns, material for the media, publications, articles and interviews.
3. An analysis of the social factors influencing disability policy and posing demands on the development of disability policies in society. In society, there are several trends, the effects of which on the inclusion and equality of persons with disabilities need to be further studied. In such a way, disability policy, social actions and their results can be promoted in a more systematic and more targeted way.
4. To ensure the inclusion and equality of the child with disability, in the Disability Policy Programme, attention has been paid at a crosscutting theme to the equal opportunities of the child with disability with his or her peers in several thematic content areas in terms of their description of the situation



today, the objectives and the directions of development. Especially, in the objectives of the thematic area independent living, attention has been paid to the services and support for the child and his or her family. In this context, we have emphasised the rights of parents with disabilities to receive family services on an equal basis with other parents.

Finland has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (20.11.1989) in 1991. It is necessary to consider the rights, services and support of the child with disabilities in accordance with the principle of mainstreaming as part of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly within its monitoring. The rights and services of children with disabilities are realised deficiently in many ways. Services governed by several actors do not always work in a sufficiently same way or seamlessly. It is necessary to make a specific research effort into the whole framework of special day care, special support and early education and into what the needs are in terms of development and amendment. It is essential, for example, that we ensure sufficiently small group sizes which support the child's growth and development and that the personnel working with the children have a high level of professional expertise. In addition, it is necessary to pay special attention to the central phases in the child's education and to the transition between various stages so that it will be as good as possible. The first such stage is when the child moves from early education and care to primary education.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has requested repeatedly Finland to produce bet-

ter information on children with disabilities. Further, regular specialist studies are needed to find out about the welfare of children and young persons with disabilities. Also, it will be necessary to examine in what ways the age limit of 18 years set in the UN Convention on the Right of the Child is compatible with the other age limits concerning children. Other issues on the agenda include finding out about the issues on financing, for example, the introduction of a personal budget. The principle would be that the parents of a disabled child could themselves decide on the acquisition of services and support measures within the framework of an agreed budget.